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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

Saigon 4652

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Susan Ingalls DATE 10/5/81
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ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4652

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1. CATHOLIC CITIZENS BLOC HELD PRESS CONFERENCE MORNING AUG 28 TO QUOTE EXPLAIN BLOC ATTITUDE TOWARD ELECTIONS UNQUOTE. TEXT OF AUG 10 LETTER FROM BLOC SECGEN FATHER TRAN DU TO GENERALS THIEU AND KY DEMANDING RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS (REPORTED REFTEL) WAS PASSED OUT IN ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND VIETNAMESE.

2. DU OPENED PRESS CONFERENCE BY OBSERVING THAT SOME PERSONS SAYING BLOC SUPPORTS ELECTION WHILE OTHERS SAYING BLOC OPPOSED. TRUTH IS THAT BLOC POLICY IS TO OPPOSE COMMUNISM AND SUPPORT DEMOCRACY. BLOC IS NOT POLITICAL PARTY IN ORDINARY SENSE BUT RATHER

ALTRUISTIC ORGANIZATION THAT SEEKS NO PROFIT FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BUT ONLY WORKS FOR GOOD OF NATION. DU SAID BLOC REPRESENTS TWO MILLION CATHOLICS. HE CONCLUDED OPENING STATEMEN BY SAYING HE REQUESTING GOVERNMENT TAKE NECESSARY STEPS TO INSURE NATIONAL UNITY AND DESTROY COMMUNISM.

3. BLOC COMMUNIQUE THEN READ BY FATHER DUONG HOANG THANH. COMMUNIQUE NOTES THAT MEANS FOR REALIZING DEMOCRACY ARE "ARGUABLE", SAYS BLOC HAS "SO FAR CONSIDERED WITH MUCH SYMPATHY THE CAMPAIGN OF SOME PARTS OF THE POPULATION REQUESTING CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY" AND THE GOVERNMENT'S PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. COMMUNIQUE THEN SAYS TO REACH GOAL, NATIONAL CONSENSUS IS NECESSARY, AND IF THIS CONDITION NOT MET, BLOC WILL DECLARE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY CREATAPE OF A MINORITY AND "VIETNAMESE CATHOLIC ELECTORATE WILL UNANIMOUSLY AND WITH HIGH DISCIPLINE, GIVE WAY TO THE DEMANDS OF THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE AND WILL HAVE TO TAKE ANIKDEQUAT' LINE OF CONDUCT." COMMUNIQUE MAKES NO MENTION OF RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

(2)

SEPTEL. TEXT OF COMMUNIQUE

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4. IN QUESTION PERIOD FOLLOWING READING OF COMMUNIQUE, FATHER DU SAID BLOC IS NOT RPT NOT PRESSURING GOVERNMENT ON EVE OF ELECTION,

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BUT IS JUST REMINDING AUTHORITIES THEY PROMISED TO TAKE ACTIONS WHICH WOULD CREATE AN ATOMSPHERE FAVORABLE TO DEMOCRACY. HE SAID BLOC HAS NOT RPT NOT ANNOUNCED OPPOSITION TO ELECTIONS. ASKED WHAT BLOC WILL DO IF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT RPT NOT TAKE REQUESTED ACTIONS, TRAN DU SAID BLOC ATTITUDE NOT RPT NOT YET DECIDED. HE SAID GOVERNMENT POSITION NOT YET CLEAR, AND BLOC WILL NOT TAKE POSITION UNTIL IT KNOWS GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE. HE SAID FIRMLY THAT BLOC WILL HAVE POSITION, HOWEVER.

5. ASKED ABOUT BLOC ATTITUDE TOWARD FATHER HOANG QUYNH'S FRONT OF ALL RELIGIONS AND FRONT'S CALL OR BOYCOTT OF ELECTIONS, TRAN DU SAID THAT BLOC IS FOR UNITY AND SO WILL NOT CRITICIZE ANY GROUP. HE SAID THAT HOANG QUYNH IS NOT SPOKESMAN FOR BLOC AND THAT HOANG QUYNH IS ACTING IN HIS INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY.

6. ASKED FOR NAMES OF SOME OF PRISONERS REFERRED TO IN HIS LETTER TO THIEU AND KY, FATHER DU SAID HE PREFERRED NOT GIVE OUT NAMES. HOWEVER, HE SAID HE HDD LIST OF THIRTY-TWO, INCLUDING BOTH BUDDHISTS AND CATHOLICS, WHICH HE WILLING SHOW NEWSMEN.

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7. AFTER PRESS CONFERENCE OVER, EMBOFF SUGGESTED TO FATHER TRAN DU THAT WESTERN PRESS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN TO INTERPRET COMMUNIQUE AND HIS REMARKS AS THREAT TO OPPOSE ELECTIONS UNLESS GOVERNMENT RELEASES POLITICAL PRISONERS. FATHER DU OBJECTED TO WORD "THREAT" AND SAID REPEATEDLY THAT BLOC ONLY MAKING PROPOSALS NOT RPT NOT THREATS. LODGE
BT

NOTE: PASSED S/S-O, WHITE HOUSE, DOD, CIA, USIA, NSA AT 7:15 AM, 8/28/66.

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